

When It All Feels So Big, Till It All Feels So Small

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When It All Feels So Big, Till It All Feels So Small

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Summary

Mabel Tanaka is well-known as the Mayor's rebellious, loud, and disruptive daughter.

Jerry is not the best at handling his daughter.

Mabel and Jerry absolutely do not see eye to eye.

But things get worse when Jerry starts the beltway project. After a particularly bad argument, Mabel discovers her science professor's Hopping technology and comes up with a plan to stop her father.

(AU where everything is the same with the added measure of Mabel being Jerry's adopted daughter.)

Chapter 1: Let Love Through

“That should be everything.” He said as he pulled the car’s trunk shut. Mabel watched the man as he stretched from all the back and forth he’d been doing to make sure Mabel’s things were all set. He then patted the top of the car and gestured to the backseat’s door.

“Ready to go, Mabel?”

Mabel nodded silently.

“Awesome. Time for a fresh start.”

To any other kid, this would be a delight. She was being adopted. She is going to have a family! Live in a happy home with a father that loves her. But, for Mabel, she wasn’t happy at all. It had barely been a year since she lost her grandmother. She could barely remember her parents but her grandma, she was her only stability. Her only family. Now she was gone. And now this random man thinks he can just walk into her life and claim to be her new father?

For the weeks leading up to finishing the legal stuff for the adoption, Mabel got to know about him more. His name was Jerry, he had a mother he cares for, he works in city hall doing things that Mabel didn’t understand, he loved cooking and emphasized that he’d cook her dinner almost every day and make her pancakes some mornings. When he tried to get to know her more, she didn’t say much. He knew she was selective mute, as the woman who owned the adoption home explained, and it was extra difficult for her to talk to strangers. Understanding that, he reassured her it was okay if she didn’t want to answer any of his questions. He did learn about her a little by looking at the many nature-related books she had and the oversized jacket she held onto like a safety blanket. When he asked about the jacket, he was told that Mabel had lost her Grandmother who was the only one raising her. Only thing he had left of her was the jacket.

Mabel really had no choice when she was told she’d be getting adopted. The orphanage said Jerry was a good fit to be her father. The owner of the orphanage said she was excited for Mabel to go to a loving home. So she had to go with it. Go with him.

She crawled into the backseat and Jerry buckled her small body in. “Let’s get this show on the road!” He tried to say in an upbeat manner but Mabel’s pout as she looked away from him made him drop the facade.

“... Hey... I-I know it’s scary, okay? Truth is... I lost someone I loved a lot, too. It hurts, I know it does. But I promise, I won’t try to replace anyone you love. But I will do my best to make sure you’re safe and happy. Okay?”

Mabel’s face softened only a little. She tugged her jacket closer and sniffled. Jerry didn’t say anything. He simply shut the door, sat in the driver’s seat, and the car got moving.

The drive was quiet. Very quiet. Mabel stared out the window, blankly watching the trees speeding past. Jerry peaked over at her through the rear view window a few times, wanting to say something but being unable to find anything. He didn't know what to say to ease her.

They arrived at a big house in a clean, bright suburb. Neighbors were outside either talking, doing lawn work, taking walks, or ready to head to work. Jerry parked and stepped out of the car and opened the back door for Mabel. Mabel stared at him for a moment. She'd much rather stay in this car and pray that she will fade from reality but she knew Jerry wouldn't let that happen even if that was possible. So she unbuckled herself and carefully hopped out of the car.

"Here it is. Your new home. At least, I hope you'll come to see it as home." Jerry looked down at her with a gently smile. "I really hope you'll like it here."

He lead her inside. She felt the cool conditioned air the moment the front door opened and her eyes scanned the area around her. It was very clean, almost too clean. There was the typical things a house had. A living room, a kitchen, a dining room table, photos and small decorations to make the place look nice. Nothing too special.

Jerry introduced her to his mother, who was, admittedly, very sweet. But she insisted on Mabel calling her 'Grandma' which Mabel felt a pit in her stomach just hearing that. She didn't want to call anyone else Grandma. She had a Grandma. This wasn't her Grandma.

... She wanted her Grandmother.

Jerry then took her upstairs and showed her to her new room. It was so much bigger than her previous room. Her Grandma lived in a small house and Mabel had her own small, cozy room. This room was intimidatingly big. There was a big bed with a pink canopy, a small vanity for her to sit in, a small pink table that sat beside a bin of toys all on top of a mat to play on. The white walls were decorated in flower stickers with butterflies and bees and other cute animals. She liked that part but everything else seemed a tad too... girly.

"You like it?"

Mabel nodded silently. She didn't hate it at all. It just wasn't exactly her. It wasn't Mabel.

"Perfect! You can get settled in and I will get all your things from the car."

That night, after all the fuss was over and done with, after Jerry made dinner that Mabel barely made a dent in, after she took a bath with Jerry stood in the hall just beside the open bathroom door just in case she needed help, and after she put on her oversized pajama shirt, Mabel finally went to bed. Her room was quiet and dark aside from a small nightlight that gave her corner of the room a warm glow.

She stared at the wall, curled up and hugging her Grandmother's jacket.

Mabel buried her face into it, shutting her eyes. It was almost like her Grandma was there with her. Mabel then hiccuped and weeped into the jacket. She hadn't realized how long she

hadn't cried until now. Her tiny little body shook with every shaky sob. Her little lungs could barely take in a breath. It hurt so much. She missed her so much.

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Days to weeks to months passed. Mabel got older, she became more vocal. Every birthday, Jerry baked a cake, got her gifts, and took her to the glade because that's all she asked for. He didn't know why, he didn't understand it, but he took her anyways.

Jerry giving her the time needed as the months passed worked like a charm and she spoke to him more often. It started off with saying "yes/no/I dunno" to him, then it got to her asking him for things like some juice or her favorite food for dinner, then it developed quickly from there. She began to make small comments here and there, asks questions about something so Jerry could explain it to her, and compliment him when he'd get all dressed up for a grown-up party.

He loved when she'd sometimes sit on his bed while he was finishing getting ready for work or a party. It showed she wanted to be around him. She'd either be reading one of her nature books or watching him as he did his tie. When he'd be getting ready for work, he'd put on a cool colored tie before asking her what she wanted for breakfast.

"Pancakes." She's say softly.

"My specialty." He grins. Mabel smiles back.

Jerry was beyond happy when he'd ask her something involving school or her nature books and she'd excitedly go on and on about it all. He admittedly didn't understand most of what she was telling him but he was happy to listen to her anyway because she never talked this much.

The night that things began to finally change, Jerry woke up to a teary eyed, red faced Mabel asking to sleep next to him for the night. She was shy and quiet, expecting him to simply pat her on the head and send her back to her room. He was so shocked that he almost didn't answer right away. When he snapped out of it, Jerry happily pulled back the sheets and scooped her up (as she was still too small to get up herself). Mabel had the best sleep of her life since... she couldn't remember when.

Jerry couldn't stop smiling, he almost couldn't sleep with how happy he was. How proud he was of her!

Things were going to be easier from now on. He knew it...

... Little did he know that this was not the end of their problems. FAR from it.

## Chapter 2: Anybody Have A Map?

Jerry can't remember a time anymore when he wasn't seeing a call from Mabel's schools or the police department and not thinking; "What the hell did this kid do now?"

He forgot the first time when he was called by her school after she was scolded by teachers and put in timeout during recess. The teacher was livid, the principal was livid, Mabel was pissed off, Jerry was shocked that Mabel even did something so ridiculous. According to her teacher and principal, she had put all the class pets she could find in her school in her backpack and had attempted to steal them away to free them all. On top of that, APPARENTLY she has had a history of doing this before.

How the hell did she do that!?

He decided to take her home the rest of the day and the drive home was quiet as he tried to process what he was told and what he should even say. What was he supposed to say to this? Is he supposed to ground her now? He didn't think he needed to until this!

"... I-I... I thought you were a good kid, Mabel, what happened?" Jerry spoke with a disappointed tone, shaking his head. Mabel sniffled. She looked so ashamed. Jerry hates that he feels more bad for her than upset about her stunt. He was the parent, he isn't supposed to feel so bad when she was in trouble. Right?

"Mabel, sweetheart, I know you love animals. But what you did was not okay. I didn't even know you've done this before!"

Mabel's eyes watered even more.

"You have a history of doing this, you have a history of biting, of having outbursts? We need to figure something out, I don't know how I'm supposed to—"

He stopped when he heard sniffing and then crying. Jerry looked into the rear view and saw Mabel, his daughter, his little girl, sobbing as she tried to wipe her eyes clean of tears. His heart broke and his eyes went back to the road for a moment...

Jerry stopped the car on the side of the road. He unbuckled his seat, got out, opened the back door, and immediately pulled Mabel into a hug.

"It's okay, sweetheart, you're okay—"

"Do you hate me? Are you gonna take me back?"

Jerry pulled away to look at the crying child in shock.

"... Why would I ever do that...?"

"Because of what I did!"

He feels a huge pang in his chest and he cups her face gently. He almost didn't know what to say, but the words come out so naturally.

"Mabel... I love you so much. I chose you because I love you. I'm not gonna send you back and put you through all of that because of this."

Mabel looked at him through blurry eyes and hiccups. "Really...?"

"Of course."

She kept staring at him before she embraced him tightly, still crying. "I love you too, dad..."

Jerry could not fight back the tears this time. He held her so tight, tighter than ever before. He caressed her messy head of hair that he had tried to pin back with cute decorative hair clips but she always took them out by the end of the school day.

"Whatever happens, there's nothing we can't fix, okay?"

"Promise...?"

"I promise."

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Years passed, a lot had changed as Mabel grew up, and things... weren't perfect.

Mabel was 19 years old now, a college student at Beaverton University which Jerry was obviously very proud of. On top of that, Jerry had been mayor for a good four years, aiming for another four now. At a quick glance, her life looked perfect. She had everything a girl her age could need and want... and yet-

Dad: *ok I'm meeting with a few people today. I'll see you after your classes. I love you* ❤️

Good. He thought she was at school. Time to enact her plan. Mabel grabbed her sneakers and slipped them over mismatched socks and pulled on her jacket that had begun to fit her. What had also changed was her bedroom. She very quickly grew out of the girly pink and grew into the more grungy, nature-loving rebellious teen she was. That didn't explain the mess, though. Her clothes that she got second hand or from her college, or from events she was part of were scattered all over her floor and bed and Jerry had told her to clean it up MANY times but she never did because she "had her own system" and "would get to it" which Jerry would respond with "I have a system too; you don't clean, you get grounded". That hadn't really worked on her since she turned eighteen.

Mabel grabbed her skateboard and stopped at her shelf where a photo of her Grandma Tanaka sat. "See you later, Grandma."

She bounded down the stairs, skipping the last two steps, and running towards the door. Before she opened it, she stopped and backtracked. She went to her other Grandma and gave her a kiss on the cheek. “See you later too, Nonna!”

“Have a good day, my love!”

Mabel booked it out the door, hopped onto her skateboard, and zoomed down the driveway and down the street. This was the fastest she’s ever moved. She was so fast she might as well have been a car. She didn’t stop for anything...

... Okay, she stopped to pet a cute dog sticking its head out a car window. But THEN she didn’t stop for anything!

She stopped when she finally arrived at the glade. Where there was once peace and quiet, there was now loud construction and a giant metal fence up, locking everyone out. There were men in hard hats and orange vests standing by as dynamite was placed on a dam.

HELL NO.

Everyone stood back as the foreman counted down.

3...

2...

“WAIT!!” Mabel shouted, running up onto the dam with one shoe as her other shoe had caught on the fence when she climbed over. “EVERYONE! Stop what you’re doing! This is cancelled!!

“Hey! Get off that dam!” The foreman shouted. “It’s full of dynamite!”

“Then come take it out!” Mabel said simply.

“We can’t!”

Mabel shrugged. “Fine! I’ll do it—“

“NO NO NO NO!!” The workers shouted in a panic.

“MABEL TANAKA. What’re on earth are you doing!?” A voice silenced everyone and got the immediate attention of Mabel. She watched as the workers moved aside, revealing none other than Jerry who did NOT look happy. Mabel scowled and stared him down without a single ounce of fear.

“Dad.”

That’s when they started to yell over each other.

“WHY do you keep doing this!?”

“When are you gonna wake up, dad!? Huh!?”

“Why are you even here, Mabel!?”

“You’re gonna have blood on your hands!”

“We have things to do! A freeway to build!”

“You want blood on your hands!?”

Jerry let out a frustrated noise the moment they stopped yelling over one another. “MABEL! I can’t keep having this argument with you *all the time!*”

Mabel scoffed. “We don’t have this argument *all the time!*”

But Jerry was correct. He can recall every single time they’ve had this same exact argument. At city hall, at campaign events, at their own home where Mabel would be yelling outside as Jerry yelled at her to get back in the damn house.

A worker watching whispered to the foreman. “Ooooh, is *that* his daughter?”

“Adopted.” The foreman whispered back.

“Seriously, Dad! This is illegal!” Mabel said. “How are you gonna just blow up a pond full of animals?”

“Because there ARE no animals!”

“Oh, oh! You just have to be, like, veeery still... and just listen...”

Everyone stood there in silence. They looked at each other in confusion. Jerry stared at his daughter in exhaustion.

“Mabel—“

“Wait wait!!”

Another beat of silence.

“Ugh...” Jerry exclaimed.

“... Wait, where are the animals...?”

“We don’t have time for this, Mabel! Now get over here RIGHT now!”

“Pfft! I’m not a kid anymore! I’m nineteen!”

“Really? Is that why you had to sneak away from your classes to be here without me knowing? Is that what an adult does now, Mabel?”

“... W-Well, you can’t make me!”

Jerry gave her an unimpressed look before he made his way over to her. A few of the workers let out small sounds of “ooh” and “she in for it” before Jerry grabbed her by her arm that wasn’t covered by a cast. Her left arm was broken during an argument— Jerry didn’t break it. But he argued with her so much that she fell off the stage at a campaign and snapped her forearm right in half. Jerry still felt horrible for it.

Jerry began dragging her as she protested.

“DAD! Come on! You’re the Mayor! Aren’t you supposed to do what’s right for this city?”

“I am, Mabel! I am!” Jerry argued. Once they were far enough away from the dam, he yanked her forward and held her by the shoulders. “I don’t know what’s gotten into you, young lady—“

“Oh, so I’m a lady now? I thought I was a kid!”

Jerry gave an aggravated growl before it melted into a frustrated laugh. “You are impossible!”

“No one even wants your stupid highway!”

“Ha! Everyone wants my ‘stupid’ highway. It’s why I’m getting reelected— which benefits YOU, TOO.”

“How could you take their homes!?”

“ENOUGH, Mabel! I’m tired of this! I’m tired of arguing and trying to not get you arrested for doing things like this! You’re skipping your classes, for God’s sake! You’re putting your future at risk for what!?”

“YOU'RE putting this WHOLE PLACE at risk!”

“I said enough, Mabel! Now if you excuse us, we have jobs to do and YOU have college to be at right now. This conversation is over.” Jerry turned and gave the signal and, in an instant, the dam blew to pieces with a huge boom. The ground rumbled beneath their feet. Mabel gasped, horrified.

Jerry turned back to Mabel who looked absolutely devastated. His look of anger softened immediately. Dammit, even after all this time, even when he was absolutely livid at her... he couldn’t stay mad. He frowned and cupped her face gently.

“Hey... listen, Mabel, I’m your father... I love you and my job is to make sure y—“

Mabel shoved his hand away and backed away, eyes glossy with tears. Her face held a look of contempt as she shook her head. “You’re not my father.”

Jerry’s eyes widened. “Mabel, you...” he chuckled weakly. “No, Mabel, no. You don’t mean that—“

“You’re NOT. MY FATHER. You’ve NEVER been!”

There was dead silence before Mabel ran off, back over the fence and dropping to the other side and grabbing her shoe. She was gone in seconds and Jerry just stared in shock. He couldn't say anything. Couldn't do anything. That is until he felt all eyes on him and he turned to the workers.

“Ahem— okay, show is over. Back to work!”

They immediately did so, very awkwardly.

Jerry turned back around and felt a lump in his throat...

Chapter 3: Daddy, Can You Hear Me?

Chapter Summary

This chapter is mostly a lotta yapping

Mabel felt terrible. Absolutely horrible. So much so, she didn't go to her classes that day. She just went back home and cried. She had been keeping it together for days, WEEKS, and still nothing. She could just never get through to her father no matter how hard she tried.

Dad: I'm sorry about today. Can we talk later? ❤️

He wanted to talk? Mabel didn't want him to talk, she wanted him to listen! Is that so hard to do!? Why couldn't he just listen to her!?

Mabel stared at the text message for a long time, trying to figure out how to respond before she gave up completely and shut off her phone. She put it down and buried her face in her pillows. She had been crying for about an hour and she was absolutely exhausted. Emotionally, at least.

Why, of all people, does her father not listen to her? Why will he only listen to snobby rich people? Why does he listen to people who have no idea what they're talking about? Why is Mabel the only one her father didn't listen to...?

Sometimes Mabel wondered if Jerry even liked her. He adopted her but did those feelings he had when he adopted her begin to fade? He says he loves her over and over but how much of that was even true now? If he loved her, why didn't he listen? Why was every moment they were together tense or just them arguing? Why is it, that every time Mabel tried to make Jerry SEE her, HEAR her, UNDERSTAND her, he just WOULDN'T? Was she that invisible to her father...?

How did they drift apart so fast after years of building up that love and trust in one another?

Mabel wouldn't help but feel like that was all her fault...

Sometimes Mabel wondered how things would be if she didn't lose her Grandma Tanaka. If it'd be easier with her.

Mabel turned her head on her pillow and sighed heavily.

How was she meant to get Jerry to listen to her...?

... Wait...

A petition!

She can get a lot of people to sign it and then she can show it to her father and then he'd have to stop the beltway project! Right? Why else would petitions be a thing? He can't ignore the opinions of Beaverton's residents.

Mabel got up, looked around her room for a clipboard and paper, and got to work.

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"Hi! I'm Mabel Tanaka! I just need twelve minutes for your time!"

Door slams shut.

She didn't even get to— whatever. Next house should be easier.

"... I just need one minute of your time!"

Door slams shut.

"We can do this in twelve seconds—!"

Door slams shut.

This happened repeatedly, no one listening to her for even a moment. They'd just roll their eyes and slam the door in her face. Over and over, lil damn clockwork, as if they had anything better to do which she ABSOLUTELY doubted!

Can't they just LISTEN to her first!? It's just a damn petition!

Did no one seriously care!?

Soon, she was found back at home, utterly defeated and with nothing but an empty petition in her hand. Her last desperate attempt and hope to get her father to hear her was crushed. As she took off her shoes at the door, her Nonna greeted her with that sweet smile.

"Mabel! How was school today?"

Right. School.

"Hi, Nonna. It was... good."

"That's great, dear! Did your father call you?"

Mabel checked her phone.

***Dad:*** *Running late tonight. I'm sorry. I'll send money for dinner.*

**Dad:** *We can talk tomorrow, I promise.*

**Dad:** *I love you* ❤️❤️❤️

Mabel scowled at the texts and stuffed her phone in her backpack. “He said he’s running late tonight. I’ll get us something to eat.”

“Thank you, sweetheart.”

“How’d the people at that senior service treat you?”

“Oh, very well! Those people are so kind! I have to tell you about—“

As she rambled on, Mabel listened as best she could but her mind was elsewhere. Her and Nonna had dinner like usual, minus Jerry, and Mabel went to bed before he got home. She wasn’t asleep but when Jerry got home and he asked if Mabel was awake, Mabel stayed silent until he simply sighed and walked away from her bedroom door.

Mabel couldn’t sleep all night. So, instead of sleeping, she got out her laptop and numbed her brain with video after video of goodness knows what until she got recommended a video posted on Jerry’s channel that was used for Mayoral stuff she didn’t care about. She had forgotten she subscribed to it when she used to be happy about her father being the Mayor.

She clicked on the video.

*“The Beaverton beltway will be my proudest accomplishment as Mayor. Finally connecting Beaverton... to itself.”*

Mabel pouted as she watched, quietly grumbling to herself.

*“I love animals, almost as much as I live Beaverton.”*

Was that even true? He never cared about animals nearly as much as Mabel did. Sure, he’d let her ramble on about animals and maybe he’d remember what she told him but she never got the idea that he LOVED animals. Except horses, of course. God, he really loved horses.

*“We were very careful to locate the beltway only across land that wasn’t home to any wildlife! It’s why the state gave us permission to build!”*

Wait a second.

Mabel’s eyes widened and she sat up.

She rewinded.

*“... only across land that wasn’t home to any wildlife. It’s why the state gave us permission to build!”*

Mabel gasped.

That dirty little **LIAR**.

~~~~

“Didn’t you say she had a history of angry outbursts?”

“Have you gotten her into therapy?”

“She’s such a troublemaker.”

“She’s been nothing but a problem for everyone.”

“Why hasn’t he sent her away for a while?”

Jerry had heard it all, whether they expected him to hear or not. And it makes him mad every time he’s heard it. It’s been this way since Mabel was a child. People questioning his parenting, talking bad about his daughter, preferring she wasn’t around at all, asking him if he regretted adopting her.

He couldn’t fathom ever hating his own daughter or preferring her gone! Sure, he has had days where he wished he was anywhere else that isn’t arguing with his daughter who could never just sit still and think before acting. But that was just typical thoughts of being a parent! But he had never, EVER agreed that her being gone was ever the best outcome.

Jerry would rather die than lose one of the few people he loved more than anything in the entire damn universe.

So, naturally, it pained him when they’d argue. He hated when he’d get mad and he’d yell at her. He hated when he upset her so much, she’d lock herself in her bedroom all day until they “reconciled”. And he hated himself when he saw those tears in Mabel’s eyes before she said those words;

‘You aren’t my father.’

His mind told him it was just because she was angry. She didn’t mean any of it...

But after everything... did she really not mean it? Or was this something she’d felt for awhile?

Jerry wish he understood Mabel. He thought that he would someday but he just never could. Any attempt would end in a fight and things being worse than before.

And now it’s all lead to this.

Jerry returned home, physically and emotionally exhausted. He checked on his mother, who was fast asleep, and then went to Mabel’s room. The door was closed and had on a silly sign

Mabel wanted when she was about thirteen that said; “KEEP OUT!! DANGER ZONE!!”

With how much of a mess her room was, that sign remained kind of true.

Jerry knocked gently.

“Mabel? Are you awake?”

... Silence.

“... Sweetheart?” As if a nickname would make her answer.

But he got nothing.

“... Okay. Goodnight, babygirl. I love you.”

Whether she was asleep or just awake and ignoring him, he wanted to at least let her know.

Maybe the therapy suggestion wouldn’t be too bad.

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***Dad:*** *I had to leave early but I promise we will talk when I get home. Early this time.*

***Dad:*** *I love you.* ❤️

Mabel grumbled and grabbed her things as she rushed out the door.

“Mabel, what about your breakfast?”

“I’m not hungry, Nonna! You can have it— I’ll see you later! Love you!”

And she was off to Beaverton University. She needed to talk to her professor.



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